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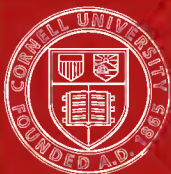
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THE FRENCH WARS OF
RELIGION

HELPS FOR STUDENTS OF HISTORY. No. 8

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THE FRENCH WARS OF RELIGION

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THE FRENCH WARS OF RELIGION

INTRODUCTORY

THE GROWTH OF PROTESTANTISM.

THE early French Reformers, though it suited their opponents to call them Lutherans, habitually spoke of themselves as *Ceux de l'Évangile*, and this rather cumbrous phrase denotes at once the origin and the character of the movement. At the opening of the reign of Francis I. (1515), the disorders of the Church—the non-residence and pluralism of the Bishops, the ignorance of the inferior clergy, the relaxation of discipline in the monasteries and nunneries—had convinced the great majority of serious thinking men of the necessity for Reform. The dissemination of Luther's writings in French translations (1519) prepared the soil, but the actual movement was initiated by the Bishop of Meaux, Guillaume Bricconnet, who towards the close of the year 1520 invited his old pupil, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples,

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with some of his friends, to come and preach in his diocese. Lefèvre, who was before all things a scholar and a searcher after truth, had for many years successfully carried on a great work in the University of Paris. A sympathiser with humanism, without being himself a true humanist, he had completely reformed the teaching of the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium*. But his chief energies had been given to the task of purifying Aristotle from the misinterpretations of his translators and commentators.' For the last thirteen years, however, he had devoted himself mainly to theology, and after editing several works of a mystical character, including those of the pseudo-Dionysius and the Cardinal of Cusa, he turned to the Scriptures as the worthiest object of a man's study. Just as he had purified the text of Aristotle, so now he sought to purify the teaching of Christ and the primitive Church. On being summoned to Meaux, he "preached," as he said, "Christ from the sources," and soon afterwards, at the prompting of the Queen-Mother and her daughter Margaret, he published a revised French translation of the New Testament (1523).

Thus, under Lefèvre's guidance, the new movement was largely evangelical in character, adopting as its watchword the all-sufficiency of the Gospel. Lefèvre himself, who was by temperament a

conservative, and who as a mystic was more or less indifferent to forms and ceremonies, never left the Catholic Church, and with his more moderate followers aimed at reforming the Church within the Church and by the Church. But the movement soon developed a more radical wing, which, under the leadership of Guillaume Farel, carried Lefèvre's principles to their logical conclusion. In their desire for simplification these more ardent spirits came to reject as superstitious doctrines and practices, such as purgatory and the worship of the Virgin Mary and the Saints, for which they could find no authority in Holy Writ, and to look upon the Mass and the adoration of the elements as downright idolatry.

The new movement, in its more moderate phase, appealed to that double spirit of individualism and free-inquiry which was inherent in the Renaissance. The majority of the French humanists welcomed the Reformers as allies against the Sorbonne and obscurantism, and the King himself, who was a true child of the Renaissance, extended to them a wavering protection. But these sympathies were gradually alienated by the iconoclastic temper of the extremists. The mutilation of a favourite statue of the Virgin at Paris (1528), and the placarding of the city with an offensive broadside against the Mass (1534), dis-

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gusted the humanists and all moderate Churchmen, and filled the King with fury. Moreover, what was really more fatal to the Protestant cause, these outrages were deeply resented by the common people. The statues of the Virgin and the Saints, which guarded their houses and looked down on them from every street-corner, were the most real thing in their religion; the wafer of the Mass which the broadside attacked with such coarse virulence was for them in real verity the Body of the Lord.

On each occasion violence was met by violence. Less than a year after the outrage on the Virgin's statue the distinguished scholar Louis de Berquin, who "might have been the Luther of France," was burnt for heresy. The affair of the placards had a wider effect and resulted in twenty-three executions. But in July, 1535, Francis I., who was still angling for an alliance with the German Protestants, issued an edict of amnesty. Five months earlier (February 1) he had sent to the German States a manifesto defending the punishment of men who were, he said, criminals and rebels. In answer Calvin addressed to him from Basle the noble Preface, dated August 23, 1535, to his *Institution of the Christian Religion*, which appeared in the following March. Though only a sketch in comparison with the form it finally assumed, it was complete in plan and essentials. It marks the

opening of a new chapter in the history of French Protestantism, for it gave the Reformers, in place of the undogmatic and mainly practical teaching of Lefèvre, who died shortly before its publication, a reasoned theological system.

At the same time it widened the breach between the Reformers and their opponents, and definitely divided France into two religious camps. After the truce of Nice, and the interview with the Emperor at Aigues-Mortes (1538), Francis I. addressed himself in earnest to the work of suppressing heresy, and the last seven years of his reign (1540-1547) were marked by severe edicts of repression and numerous executions. But in spite of this policy of persecution, perhaps by reason of it, the work of propagandism went on in secret, and by the end of the reign there was not a province in France, except Brittany, in which Protestantism had not acquired a foothold. Its adherents came chiefly from the artisans of the towns, with a sprinkling of monks and *curés*; but it also penetrated into a few country districts, such as the neighbourhood of Rouen, and though the majority of the humanists were, like Rabelais, repelled by its growing intolerance and violence, in some of the Universities, especially Orleans, Bourges, and Nîmes, there was a decidedly Protestant atmosphere.

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Under Henry II., who was a more sincere and whole-hearted Catholic than his father, the same vigorous measures against heretics were continued. In the first year of the reign (1547) the notorious *Chambre Ardente*, a new criminal court of the *Parlement* of Paris, was instituted, and at least a hundred persons, chiefly artisans and small shopkeepers, were condemned to death. But, nevertheless, down to 1552 the King and his advisers regarded the repression of heresy as a secondary affair, and then the war with the Empire and Spain absorbed most of their energies. Thus Protestantism advanced with rapid strides.

In 1555 it began to organise its churches, and by the close of 1558 thirty-four churches, beginning with Paris, had been established, largely at the instigation and under the supervision of Calvin. In that year Calvin writes that he had been told by a good authority that there were 300,000 Protestants in France, and during the next few years the numbers rapidly increased. Protestantism, which at first had been confined to the lower classes and the religious orders, now began to spread among the higher ranks of society. The most notable additions were the two Châtillon brothers, Gaspard de Coligny and François d'Andelot, Antoine de Bourbon, titular King of Navarre, and his brother

Louis, Prince of Condé. In 1559 another important step was taken. The first Synod of the French Protestant Church was opened at Paris, and from it resulted a scheme of Church Government and a Confession of Faith. The language of the latter, which is singularly clear and noble, is doubtless Calvin's.

In 1558 Henry II., who had become gradually alive to the dangers of this growing heresy, definitely made up his mind to make peace with Spain in order to have leisure to suppress it. The Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis, the terms of which were very disadvantageous to France, was accordingly signed in February, 1559. In the following June Henry assembled the Paris *Parlement* to discuss the religious question; and when Anne Du Bourg, nephew of a former Chancellor, advocated the suspension of all persecution of so-called heretics, the King was so incensed that he had him arrested, and vowed that he would see him burned with his own eyes. The mortal wound which he received in the jousts held on the last day of the month was regarded by many Protestants as the judgment of God. He died on July 10, 1559.

The accession of his son, Francis II., a sickly youth, the husband of Mary Stewart, threw all the power into the hands of his wife's uncles, the

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Guises; and the Queen-Mother, Catherine de' Medici, made common cause with them. François de Guise, the eldest brother, was a fine soldier, and, except for the fact that he was a foreigner, not unpopular. He left policy and statecraft to his brother Charles, the Cardinal of Lorraine, who was a thoroughgoing opponent of Protestantism, and who was hated for his insincerity, his avarice, and his personal cowardice. Just before the end of the year Du Bourg was executed, and his speech on the scaffold made a profound impression. Political agitation increased, and a plot for the capture of the Guises was definitely organised. The acting leader was a Protestant gentleman, La Renaudie, but he had promise of secret support from Condé. The Guises got wind of the conspirators' plans, and the Tumult of Amboise, as it was contemptuously called, was suppressed with great barbarity. How far the movement was political and how far religious is not easy to determine; but it seems generally to be agreed that it was not so entirely political as the Protestants liked to represent it.

Its barbarous suppression increased the unpopularity of the Government and the state of disorder in the country. Catherine therefore determined upon a change of policy, and appointed Michel de l'Hôpital, a man of tolerant views, to be Chancellor (April 1, 1560). At an Assembly of

Notables held in August at Fontainebleau the party of conciliation were in a majority, and the Estates-General were summoned for December. But the unpopularity of the Guises and the tension between them and the Bourbons brought the country to the verge of civil war. There were frequent disturbances, especially in the South, and Condé and Navarre were arrested (November). Condé was condemned to death, and the sentence would have been carried out but for the death of Francis II., which took place on December 5. He was succeeded by his brother, Charles IX., a boy of ten.

When the Estates met at Orleans (December 13) the Chancellor in his opening speech struck the note of the new policy of toleration. Its fruits during the year 1561 were—(1) two Edicts more or less favourable to the Protestants; (2) a prorogued meeting of the Estates at Orleans, at which both the religious and the financial questions were considered; (3) a Colloquy held at Poissy between leading representatives of the two religious parties. As an attempt to arrive at a solution this latter was a failure, but it served to make the reformed doctrines more widely known, and to bring adherents to the Protestant cause. As a result, the country became more disturbed than ever, and Catherine summoned a fresh conference, the result

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of which was the "Edict of January" (January 17, 1562). By it the Protestants were forbidden to assemble in any building, or to assemble at all within the walls of any town. But with these limitations the right of free assembly was granted to them; and thus Protestantism, for the first time in France, received legal sanction. Neither party was satisfied and the massacre at Vassy by the followers of the Duke of Guise, in which twenty-three Protestants were killed and over one hundred wounded (March 1, 1562), precipitated the outbreak of that open warfare to which events had been surely tending.

RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE PARTIES

Varying estimates have been made of the number of the Protestants at the outbreak of the war, but at the most they cannot have exceeded 1,500,000, or about a tenth of the whole population. Their stronghold was the square formed by the Rhone and the Saône, the Loire, the Bay of Biscay, and the Pyrenees, with Normandy and Dauphiné as outlying fortresses. They were especially strong in Poitou and Guyenne and Lower Languedoc. During the short reign of Francis II., Protestantism had considerably changed in character. Though still purely religious in its aims, it had become imbued with a

political element. To "Huguenots of Religion" were now added "Huguenots of State"—men who had joined the cause from dislike of the Guise domination or some other party reason, including not a few whose only Protestantism consisted in offering the grossest insults to Catholic forms of religion. To this new condition of things corresponded a new name, that of Huguenot. Its precise origin is uncertain, but recent research has shown that it is at any rate purely French. Among the lower classes Protestantism was still chiefly to be found in the artisans of the towns. The peasants and the country clergy were still strongly Catholic. Among the most Catholic provinces were Picardy and Brittany, though many of the Breton nobles had become Protestants. Paris and the neighbourhood, with the sole exception of Meaux, never wavered in their allegiance to the old religion.

As regards the leaders, the two parties were more evenly balanced. Just a year before the appeal to arms the Constable of Montmorency and the Duke of Guise, sinking the dissensions which during the reign of Henry II. had done so much to weaken foreign policy and to promote disorder at home, with the Marshal de Saint-André for a third, had formed an alliance, known as the Triumvirate, the object of which was to counteract the Protestant

leanings of the Court. In pursuance of their aims they entered into relations with Rome and Spain, and with the help of the latter Power had no difficulty in detaching the weak and vain King of Navarre, who had been named Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, from the Protestant cause. His wife, however, Jeanne d'Albret, brave, pious, and austere, remained unshaken in her convictions.

With the defection of Navarre, the leadership of the party passed to his brother, Louis de Condé. Of easy morals and popular manners, *Le petit homme*, as he was affectionately called by his co-religionists, was a brave and enterprising rather than a skilful commander. Alike in military genius and in strength of purpose he was inferior to Gaspard, Admiral de Coligny, who, if he had some of the defects of a party leader, was a true patriot and a far-seeing statesman, not unworthy, on the whole, of the hero-worship which has been accorded to him by Protestants of all countries. Other Protestant leaders were D'Andelot, Coligny's brother, La Rochefoucauld, head of a great family in Poitou, and Francois de La Noue, nicknamed *Bras de Fer*, who was as humane and tolerant as he was brave and resourceful.

On the Catholic side the most notable commanders, next to the chiefs, were Tavannes, the King's Lieutenant-General for Burgundy, and Monluc,

who held the same office in Guyenne. Like La Noue, they both left records of the events in which they played a part. Those of Monluc, who, though a tepid Catholic, regarded the Huguenots as rebels and treated them with brutal and ruthless severity, hold the first rank among the many memoirs of that memoir-writing age.

There remains the figure of the Queen-Regent, Catherine de' Medici. Long regarded as a monster of cruelty and perfidy, she has of recent years profited by the tendency of historians to find excuses for all the traditional criminals of history. She was now forty-two years of age, of a jovial temperament, liberal and good-natured, fond of hunting and violent exercise, and, above all, eager to assert that political authority from which she had been debarred during the reigns of her husband and eldest son. The goal of her policy was peace, and her method of dealing with the religious question was to trim the balance between the parties by making concessions to both alternately. But her indifferentism in morals and religion made this method fatal. She was incapable of appreciating the force of religious passions, and she had learnt in Italy, and in the pages of Machiavelli, whose "Prince" was dedicated to her father, the pernicious maxim that the laws of ordinary morality are not binding on the State. And to these prime causes

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of her failure must be added constitutional timidity, self-conceit, and a lack of real ability for which all her industry could not atone.

The Wars of Religion were not continuous, but were separated by intervals of peace. The three wars prior to the Massacre of St. Bartholomew covered three and a half years, while the intervals of peace, of which the longest was that between the First and the Second War (March, 1563, to September, 1567), occupied a period of seven years. Between the Massacre and the Peace of Fleix (November, 1580) there were four years and five months of war, and three years and ten months of peace. Then followed five years of peace, after which the formation of the Paris League—the result of Henry of Navarre having become the next heir to the throne—gave a new character to the struggle.

From the outset, both parties employed foreign mercenaries, chiefly Swiss and Germans, and these mercenaries, especially the Germans, added greatly to the horrors of the war; for their return to their own homes was always marked by a long trail of pillage and violence. For the first two months the discipline in the Huguenot army was extremely strict, but, owing partly to the mercenaries and partly to the crowds of camp-followers, it was found impossible to maintain it. Before long the

land in many districts ceased to be cultivated, and the economic difficulties were aggravated by frequent visitations of the plague. From 1562 to 1564 it raged without abatement and was followed by a winter of intense severity.

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF THE STRUGGLE

THE first overt act of war was the seizure of Orleans by Condé. It was followed by massacres of the Protestants at Sens and Tours and Toulouse, and by an edict of the *Parlement* which proclaimed the Protestants to be beyond the protection of the law. The Protestants, on the other hand, roused the fury of their opponents by their iconoclastic excesses. Churches were stripped bare of everything that appealed to the eye or charmed the imagination. Statues of the saints, stained-glass windows, crucifixes, vestments, bells, organs—all were destroyed as symbols of idolatry. Even tombs were desecrated. One of the worst outbursts of vandalism was at Caen, where the Huguenots did great damage to many of the churches, especially to the *Abbaye aux Hommes*, the foundation of William the Conqueror, whose tomb was ruthlessly destroyed.

Another evil feature of the wars was the appeal for assistance to foreign Powers. The Guises

entered into relations with Spain and Germany and the Pope. A more definite step, which did more harm than good to the Protestant cause, was the compact which Condé and Coligny made with Queen Elizabeth. In return for a loan of 100,000 crowns, Havre was to be handed over to her as a pledge for the restoration of Calais, and English troops were to be sent to garrison it.

The first pitched battle was fought at Dreux on December 19, 1562. The Protestants were superior in cavalry, but greatly inferior in infantry and artillery. At first their cavalry, conspicuous by their white coats, seemed on the point of carrying the day by their magnificent charge; but the German landsknechts, who formed half their infantry, behaved badly, and their defeat was completed by Guise, who, having bided his time with great patience, attacked with fresh troops, and put the whole army to flight. The day was disastrous to the leaders. Saint-André was killed, and Montmorency and Condé were taken prisoners. A month earlier the King of Navarre had died from the effects of a wound which he had received at the siege of Rouen. Thus, the only Catholic leader left was Guise, and in February of the following year (1563) he was assassinated before Orleans by a Huguenot gentleman named Poltrot, who denounced Beza and

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Coligny as instigators of the crime. In both cases the accusation was false; but Coligny admitted that he had employed Poltrot as a spy, and said with brutal frankness that he had heard with joy of the death of "that enemy of the Gospel." The Guises continued to believe in his guilt, and the rivalry between the two houses assumed the character of a blood-feud. A month after the assassination the First War was ended by the Peace of Amboise (March 19). Condé, who, in the absence of Coligny, was with D'Andelot the negotiator for the Protestants, made the grave mistake of obtaining greater concessions for the Protestant nobles than for the humbler members of the party. It weakened his influence and it weakened the Protestant cause, which began to be regarded as the religion of a class, and from that time made few converts.

The deaths of the Catholic leaders, the increasing age of Montmorency, and the diminished influence of Condé, greatly increased the power of Catherine and with the help of L'Hôpital she proceeded to put in force her policy of moderation and see-saw. With a view to a re-establishment of the royal authority, she procured an edict declaring the King of age, and in March, 1564, she set out with him and the Court on a tour of France, which lasted till the close of 1565. Its chief incident

was an interview at Bayonne (June-July, 1564) with her daughter, the Queen of Spain, who was accompanied by the Duke of Alva. There is no evidence to show that Catherine did more than make vague promises to remedy the religious situation, but the Protestants confidently believed that a definite policy was agreed upon which bore fruit in the Blood Council of Alva in the Netherlands and the Massacre of St Bartholomew.

The dispatch of Alva to the Netherlands with a picked force of 10,000 veterans and a levy by Charles IX. of 6,000 Swiss for the protection of his kingdom in case of invasion caused great uneasiness to the French Protestants. Condé left the Court, and with Coligny concerted a plan for a seizure of the King's person at Meaux (September, 1567). The enterprise failed, but the Court had to fly, and Catherine and the King deeply resented the humiliation.

The one pitched battle of the Second War of Religion was fought near Saint-Denis (November 10, 1567), and the Huguenots, greatly inferior in numbers, suffered another defeat; but the death of the Constable caused confusion in the Catholic ranks, and the Huguenots retreated in but slight disorder. Another peace was made in March, 1568, but it only lasted for five months, and it was broken by frequent acts of hostility. The

enterprise of Meaux had been fatal to the policy of the moderates, and in May, 1568, L'Hôpital was ordered to give up the seals. A Catholic propaganda was set on foot, and various associations were formed for the defence of the Catholic religion.

Murders and robberies were now of daily occurrence, and the increase in hatred and violence was reflected in the two chief battles of the Third War. Both at Jarnac (on the Charente) and Moncontour (in Poitou) not only was the slaughter tremendous, but the ordinary rules of civilised warfare were violated. At Jarnac (March 13, 1569) Condé had no sooner given himself up as a prisoner on the promise of safety than he was shot through the head by a Catholic gentleman, and his body was brought in triumph to Jarnac on an ass's back. At Moncontour (October 3), where the Huguenots, after little more than half an hour's furious fighting, suffered a still more crushing defeat, the landsknechts, 4,000 in number, were slaughtered almost to a man. In spite of these two heavy reverses, the Huguenots continued to fight with great stubbornness. The party had been purged of its less serious elements, and they now had the possession of La Rochelle, which took the place of Orleans as a base, giving them a port and a means of communication with England. The resistance

of Saint-Jean d'Angély for a month and a half against Anjou, the King's younger brother, who was in nominal command of the Catholic army, nullified all the advantages of Moncontour. The desultory fighting which went on during the first half of 1670 was more or less favourable to the Protestants, and on August 8 a new peace was signed at Saint-Germain. The terms were much the same as before, except that the Protestants obtained for two years four places of safety—La Rochelle, Montauban, La Charité, and Cognac.

After the death of Condé, Jeanne d'Albret presented his son, a boy of fifteen, and her own son, Henry of Navarre, aged sixteen, to the Huguenot soldiers as the chiefs of the party; but the real leader was Coligny, who by his conduct of the war in the face of greatly superior forces had gained a brilliant reputation. He now saw a chance of uniting all parties to assist the Netherlands in their heroic struggle against Spain, and he found both Catherine and Charles IX., who now began to assert himself, ready to fall in with his views. Coligny was received at Court and made a member of the Council, and a marriage was agreed upon between Henry of Navarre and the King's sister, Margaret. Never had the prospects of the Protestant party seemed brighter than in the early summer of 1572.

But at the first check in the affairs of the Netherlands, and at the first signs of hostility from Catholic Europe, Catherine and Charles began to draw back, and the total defeat of Genlis, who was on his way to Mons with 4,000 Huguenot troops to assist the Netherlanders, on July 19, thoroughly disenchanted the Queen-Mother with Coligny's policy. He, however, persisted, and he carried the King with him. Catherine's mind was made up. Rather than have war with Spain, Coligny must die.

CHAPTER II

FROM ST. BARTHOLOMEW TO THE DEATH OF ANJOU

THE marriage of Henry—now, by his mother's death, King of Navarre—to Margaret of Valois was celebrated on August 18. On Friday, August 22, the Admiral, while on his way from the Louvre to his lodgings hard by in the Rue Béthisy, was fired at from the window of a house which belonged to a retainer of the Guises. The shot carried away the forefinger of his right hand and broke his left arm. Catherine and the Court were thoroughly frightened, for the Huguenot gentlemen, whom the wedding had brought to Paris in large numbers, were furious and clamoured for vengeance. On August 23 Catherine hastily called a council, at which it was decided to kill the Huguenot chiefs, with the exception of Henry of Navarre and the young Condé. A reluctant consent was wrung from the King, and early in the following morning, St. Bartholomew's Day, the plan was put into execution. Henry of Guise personally superintended

the murder of the Admiral. Téligny, his son-in-law, and La Rochefoucauld also perished. Then the pent-up passions of the mob and the soldiery, who had been ordered to stand to arms, were let loose, and a general massacre ensued. It was followed by similar massacres at Meaux, Orleans, Troyes, Rouen, Lyons, and Toulouse.

It seemed at first as if Catherine had triumphed. Many of the Protestants were cowed by the loss of their leaders. At Dijon they abjured in masses, and generally the richer *bourgeoisie* were prepared to renounce liberty of worship if only they might retain liberty of conscience. But the lower classes and the ministers held firm; the fate of their brethren nerved them to a more stubborn resistance. The Protestants in the South formed a complete system of military organisation, and Languedoc was divided for the purpose into two governments. On the first anniversary of St. Bartholomew they addressed from Montauban a petition to the King in which they assumed the tone of one armed power negotiating with another on equal terms. Moreover, many of the moderate Catholics—the *Politiques*, as they came to be called, because they preferred the unity of the State to the unity of Religion—horrified at the massacres, began to enter into relations with the

Huguenots, and they found a rallying-point in the quarters of the Duke of Alençon, Catherine's youngest son, a turbulent and ambitious youth of eighteen. The Fourth War, which began immediately after the massacre, was a war of sieges. For eight months the Catholic forces hammered in vain at La Rochelle; till finally terms were made (June, 1573), and once more there was a short interval—eight months—of nominal peace. It was chiefly occupied with plots, of which D'Alençon was the centre, and in which three of Montmorency's sons were gravely compromised. At the end of July, 1574, an alliance between the moderate Catholics and the Protestants of Languedoc, of which province Damville, the second son of Montmorency, was governor, was officially declared.

Two months earlier (May 30) Charles IX. had died, and was succeeded by the Duke of Anjou, under the title of Henry III. Possessed of an attractive and dignified presence, considerable intelligence, and a love of learning and literature, he none the less proved one of the most contemptible Kings that ever sat on the French throne.

In September, 1575, D'Alençon made his escape from the Louvre, where he had been imprisoned, and there was a fear of his joining the Protestant army, which had been strongly reinforced from Germany and Switzerland. In the following

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February the King of Navarre also escaped from the Court, and returned to the Protestantism which he had temporarily abjured. The confederates were now strong enough to impose their conditions upon the King, and to exact terms more favourable to the Protestants than any previously granted (May, 1576).

But the "Peace of Monsieur," as it was called, gave profound dissatisfaction to the Catholics, and as a consequence the Catholic gentlemen of Picardy founded the League of Péronne, with Henry of Guise, who had become immensely popular with his party, as its chief. Under his ambitious guidance it aspired to become more than a local association, and was thus the forerunner of the League of Paris.

In January, 1577, a fresh war, the Sixth, broke out. Owing to dissensions between the Protestants and the moderate Catholics, their opponents gained some minor successes, but peace was restored in the following September by the Edict of Bergerac. Indeed, save for the short Seventh or Lovers' War of 1580, of which the chief incident was the brilliant capture of Cahors by the King of Navarre, there was nominal peace for eight years. "France," says the historian De Thou, after recording the Treaty of Fleix which terminated the Seventh War, "enjoyed profound

peace for five years.” But the peace was not so profound as he represents it, for it was continually broken by private warfare. He gives as the reason for this peace foreign warfare (by which he means the intervention of D’Alençon—or Anjou, as we must henceforth call him—in the Netherlands) and the “pleasures” of the Court—a mild phrase for the combination of effeminate debauchery with murderous duels and treacherous assassinations which made Paris hideous during these years. The “pleasures” were varied by elaborate penitential processions, in which the wretched King, oscillating from debauchery to superstition, played a prominent part. But it was his extravagance, his lavish liberality, to his worthless favourites, his perpetual demands for money, the ever-increasing burden of taxation, and the iniquitous exactions of the tax-farmers, that set the seal on his unpopularity.

CHAPTER III

THE LEAGUE

IN June, 1584, Anjou died, and Henry of Navarre became heir to the throne. To zealous Catholics the prospect, and a not far-distant one, of a heretic ruling over France was unendurable. Before the end of the year steps were taken to frustrate this calamity. The Guises and the other Catholic Princes joined with the King of Spain in a Holy League for "the defence of the Catholic Religion, Apostolic and Roman," and for the extirpation of heresy in France and the Low Countries. Meanwhile a new League of a democratic character was being formed at Paris, with the sixteen quarters of the city as the basis of its organisation. By the exercise of skilful propaganda it rapidly increased in numbers, and a close alliance was entered into with the Catholic Princes, whose leader, Henry of Guise, was the idol of the Paris mob.

The propaganda of the League was carried on partly by personal canvassing, partly by sermons

and pamphlets. Their most effective preacher was Jean Boucher, the one-eyed *curé* of Saint-Benoît, and their chief pamphleteer was Louis Dorleans, a Paris lawyer. Ever since the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew pamphlet warfare had been a marked feature of the struggle. Of the pamphlets which were more or less inspired by the Massacre, the most notable were the two small Latin treatises, the *Vindiciæ contra tyrannos* of Philippe Du Plessis Mornay and the *Franco-Gallia* of François Hotman. Both writers were Protestants, and both approached the question from what purported to be in the one case a philosophical, in the other an historical point of view. On the other hand, the *Réveille-matin* and *Le Tocsain contre les Massacreurs* made no pretence of being written in a judicial spirit, but were violent attacks on Catherine de' Medici. After 1576 the pamphlets became for a time less numerous, but in 1585 this warfare was renewed with increased vigour, especially on the side of the League. In a pamphlet of 1586 Dorleans declared that the two main principles of the League were "that no religion save that of the Catholic Church should have a place in this kingdom, and that no one should succeed to the throne unless he were a Catholic." In another pamphlet published in the same year he speaks of the Massacre as a *saignée très salutaire*, and he turns the theories

of the Protestant writers, such as the right to rebel against an unjust magistrate, and the right of the people to elect their monarch, against them. The same arguments which had been used by Du Plessis Mornay and Hotman to justify rebellion against a Catholic King now served to justify the exclusion of a Protestant Prince.

Meanwhile Guise and the Catholic nobles, assured of the support of the Paris League, were taking action more or less hostile to the Crown. They proclaimed the old and feeble Cardinal of Bourbon, uncle to Henry of Navarre, as the next heir to the throne, and they issued from Péronne a declaration, dated March 30, 1585, of their demands and intentions. But they did not confine themselves to words. Troops were enrolled in Germany and Switzerland, and an immense store of arms was collected. Next, important towns were seized, and before long nearly the whole of the North and Centre of France declared for the League. The South and the West remained faithful to the King.

Henry had to capitulate. By the Treaty of Nemours (July 7, 1585) he agreed to issue an edict revoking all former edicts of pacification and banishing forthwith all Protestants from the kingdom. He fulfilled his promise on July 18—just a hundred years and three months before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. When the King

of Navarre heard of it—so he told the historian Mathieu—one half of his moustache turned white. But he did not lose heart. In a document addressed to the three orders of the kingdom he put his case with remarkable force and skill (January 1, 1586). The “War of the Three Henries” had already begun. The name given to it indicates its character, for the forces of the League and the royalists acted independently of one another. Before long, however, Catherine, with her usual craving for peace, and Henry III., already tired of war, were offering terms to Navarre; but he stoutly refused to desert his co-religionists. At last fortune favoured his arms. In the early summer of 1587 he captured several towns in Poitou, and in the following October he completely defeated at Coutras the royalist commander, Joyeuse, whose force was twice as large as his own. It was the first victory the Huguenots had gained in a pitched battle. It showed that they now had a leader of genius, whose military capacity was equal to his power of dealing with men. But the success was balanced by two defeats which Guise inflicted in October on their German allies.

Throughout the year 1587 the Paris League was spreading its influence, and its revolutionary spirit was becoming more and more manifest. When

the King returned to his capital two days before Christmas, he found it in a highly inflammable condition. In his alarm he summoned 4,000 Swiss, who were at Lagny on the Marne, into the suburbs. Whereupon the heads of the League sent to Guise, urging him to come to Paris as soon as possible. He arrived in defiance of the King's express prohibition, and in an interview with him and the Queen-Mother put forward his demands. On May 11 the Swiss were ordered into the city and posted at different spots. The citizens flew to arms, raised barricades, isolated and hemmed in the soldiers, and practically besieged the King in the Louvre. Then Guise, having quieted the mob, had another conference with the King, and repeated his demands. On the following day Henry rode quietly out of Paris and made his way to Chartres, leaving his capital in the hands of the League. In July he was forced to sign at Rouen the "Edict of Union," in which he accepted all the demands of Guise and the League. So far the Revolution had succeeded, and Guise had triumphed.

But the King still had a weapon left, the cowardly weapon which in that age of treachery and violence was used even by brave men. After submitting to fresh humiliations, imposed on him by the Estates of Blois, he determined to

make an end of his powerful foe. The work was entrusted to the forty-five adventurers, mostly Gascons, who acted as his body-guard, and Guise was assassinated at the Château of Blois, where he had been summoned for a Council, on the morning of December 23, 1588. Thirteen days later Catherine de' Medici died in a room immediately below that in which he was murdered. She was in her seventieth year.

The death of Guise was very far from realising Henry's hopes. On the contrary, it confirmed the League, now more infuriated than ever, in its revolutionary course, and increased its popularity throughout the kingdom. Nearly all the important towns joined in the revolt. Tours, Blois, Caen, and Bordeaux alone remained loyal. The only course left to Henry was to implore assistance from Navarre and the Protestants. Thus, royalists and Huguenots joined forces, and, after surprising Senlis and defeating the League troops before the town, marched on Paris with an army of 30,000 good troops. Paris was on the point of surrendering, when Henry III. was stabbed at Saint-Cloud by a fanatical monk, named Jacques Clément (August 1, 1589). He died early the following morning, after recognising Navarre as his heir.

The position of the new King was far from promising. Some, indeed, of the great nobles who

had remained loyal to his predecessor, recognised him, but on conditions. He had to declare that he would maintain the Catholic religion in its entirety, and that it was his desire to submit to religious instruction. Further than this he would not go. There were many defections, including Épernon, one of the late King's favourites, who was Governor of Provence. Moreover, some of the Protestant leaders, offended by Henry's promise to maintain the Papist idolatry, withdrew their followers. Meanwhile, Mayenne, the brother of the murdered Duke of Guise, whom the League had recognised as their chief, proclaimed the old Cardinal of Bourbon, who was a prisoner in Henry's hands, as Charles X.

It was in times of crisis and adversity that Henry IV., who was now thirty-five years of age, in the full vigour of his physical and intellectual maturity, best showed the metal of which he was made. Advancing into Normandy, he repulsed the superior forces of the League at Arques, near Dieppe (September 21), then turned, and suddenly marched on Paris. But after seizing the southern *faubourgs*, he was compelled by the arrival of Mayenne with succour to abandon his project of forcing an entry into the city. During the winter he organised his Government provisionally at Tours, and at the same time he carried on the

campaign with great energy. Maine, Anjou, and the greater part of Normandy, though not Rouen, submitted to him. In March, 1590, he marched against Mayenne, who had received assistance from Flanders in the shape of a small force commanded by the Count of Egmont. The two armies met at Ivry, a little north of Dreux, and though Henry IV. had only 10,000 troops against his opponents' 20,000, he gained a brilliant victory.

The way was now open to Paris, but it was not till the beginning of May that the city was invested. Provisioned for only a month, it held out for four. At last, on August 30, when surrender was imminent, the news came that the Duke of Parma had entered France with his Spanish troops, and had been joined at Meaux by Mayenne. Thereupon Henry IV. raised the siege and went to meet him. But Parma, who was the ablest captain of his age, avoided a battle, and took up a position which enabled him to communicate freely with the capital. Paris was saved, but 13,000 persons had died of hunger, and after the siege a malignant fever carried off 30,000 more. Henry IV.'s next move was the investment of Chartres, one of the granaries of Paris. It opened its gates to him on April 19, 1591.

At this juncture he was considerably helped by the dissensions of his opponents. The Cardinal

of Bourbon had died in May, 1590, and the League had no one to take his place. There were, however, numerous candidates. In the first place, the agents of Philip II. were beginning to put forward, in defiance of the Salic Law, the claims of his daughter, who was the granddaughter of Henry II. Then there was Charles Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy, a man of vast ambitions, who, as the grandson of Francis I., dreamt of reviving the old kingdom of Arles, and the Duke of Lorraine, who was married to a daughter of Henry II. On the other hand, Mayenne, the chief of the League, had his own pretensions, which, however, it was difficult to sustain after his nephew, the young Duke of Guise, had escaped (August, 1591) from the captivity in which he had been kept since his father's assassination. Dissensions, too, arose, within the Paris League. On the one side were the "Sixteen," as the more zealous Leaguers were called, some 30,000 in number, who declined to recognise a relapsed heretic, whether he was converted or not, and who, democrats though they were, were ready to submit to the absolutism of Philip II. rather than make any compromise on the question of religion. On the other side were the moderate Leaguers, chiefly recruited from the superior *bourgeoisie*, who were willing to accept Henry IV. provided only he returned to Catholi-

cism, and who, ready though they were to receive assistance from Philip II., were firmly resolved not to hand over the kingdom to him. With this resistance to the claims of Philip II., Mayenne, for his own ends, was naturally in agreement; but as it did not suit him to break with the fanatical party, he pursued a policy of see-saw. However, when the Sixteen, becoming more violent, arrested and put to death the first President of the *Parlement* and two other councillors, he hurried to Paris and hung four of them out of hand (December).

Meanwhile, Henry IV. was besieging Rouen with great energy, but he was frustrated by the brilliant defence of the Governor, Villars, and on the arrival of Parma on the scene he had finally to raise the siege (April, 1572). Catching Parma in a disadvantageous position, he prepared to assault his camp; but the great general once more outwitted him, and withdrew his forces into safety. Having saved Rouen as he had saved Paris, he returned to the Low Countries, but he died at Arras before the end of the year.

During the year 1592 the war was carried on with varying fortunes, successes in one part of France being balanced by reverses in another. Henry made no real way; the large towns still adhered obstinately to the League, and he had neither the power nor the desire to compel the

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submission of all Catholic France. It was also a year of negotiations and intrigues. Mayenne continued to play for his own hand, treating with Spain, entering into relations with Henry IV., and keeping the balance even between the two parties of the League. At the same time, Philip II. was pressing the League to summon a meeting of the Estates-General, in order to abolish the Salic Law and thus make possible the recognition of his daughter, whom it was proposed to marry to the young Duke of Guise.

In Paris the *Politiques* or Moderates, taking courage from the summary punishment which Mayenne had inflicted on the chiefs of the Sixteen, began to organise their party and to approach the royalists. At a General Assembly it was proposed to send a message to the King, summoning him to become a Catholic; but the majority were in favour of a simple declaration that as soon as the Catholic religion was assured they were willing to lay down their arms.

It was now evident to Henry that the time had come when he must fulfil the promise he had given on his accession to the throne, that he would submit to religious instruction as a preliminary to becoming a Catholic. Accordingly, at a conference held at Suresnes between Leaguers and royalists, the Archbishop of Bourges, who was the

royalist spokesman, announced the King's intention to abjure (May 17, 1593). The "instruction" took place on July 23, and two days later there was an imposing ceremony in the old basilica of Saint-Denis, at which Henry swore to live and die in the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion. On July 31 a truce was signed for three months.

Henry's conversion scattered to the winds Mayenne's ambitious schemes, and cut the ground from under the League. In January the Estates met at Paris, and were adjourned till April; but though they continued in session till the end of the year, their proceedings became more and more of a farce. We can read an admirable caricature of them in the famous *Satyre Ménippée*, the finest pamphlet in the French language, the work of half a dozen members of the *Politique* party, which probably circulated in manuscript in the summer of 1593, but which was not printed till April, 1594.

Before this date Henry IV. had been duly consecrated at Chartres (February 27), and had entered his capital amid the plaudits of the populace (March 22). The League was vanquished, but it might fairly claim that its existence had been justified by the issue. It had been instituted to prevent a Protestant succeeding to the throne of France, and in this it had succeeded. As for its fanatical leaders, they were at any rate sincere,

and they have left a justification of their doctrines in a well-reasoned pamphlet, *Dialogue d'entre le Maheustre et le Manant*, which appeared in December, 1593.

The submission of Paris to its lawful King brought with it that of the rest of France. Rouen was ceded five days later, and other towns followed in quick succession. Then, one by one the chiefs of the League, whose aims were purely selfish, unredeemed by a glimmer of patriotism or religious principle, came to terms with the victor, and brought with them the provinces which they had been trying to make into independent principalities. Each had his price, but Henry paid it without haggling. Large though the total amount was, it was worth paying to save the country from a further period of civil warfare. The position of these Leaguers had been undermined by the declaration of war on Spain in January, 1595, and by the Papal absolution which was granted to the King in the following September. It remained to carry the war against Spain to a successful conclusion—no easy task. All through the year 1596 and the greater part of 1597 the Spanish forces maintained the upper hand. But Henry, ably assisted by Sully's financial energy and ability, never lost heart, and in September he recovered Amiens, which had fallen to the Spaniards in

March. Philip was now weary of the war, and in October he began to negotiate for peace. After long disputes, a treaty was signed at Vervins on May 2, 1598. Six weeks before this, Mercœur, the last Leaguer in the field, had submitted, and it was from Nantes, the capital of his government of Brittany, that the famous Edict which pacified the Protestants and concluded the Religious Wars was issued on April 13.

It granted to the Protestants full liberty of conscience, and liberty of public worship in certain places, including two places in every *bailliage* or *sénéchaussée*, but not within five leagues of Paris. It also granted to them full civil rights, including eligibility to all offices, and full civil protection. Special courts (*Chambres de l'Édit*) were established in the *Parlements* to try cases in which Protestants were interested. They were allowed to retain their religious synods, and even, with the King's permission, to hold political assemblies. They obtained for eight years a hundred places of safety, including such powerful strongholds as La Rochelle, Montauban, and Montpellier, the garrisons of which, as well as the Protestant Governors, were to be paid by the State.

The Edict of Nantes, says M. Mariéjol, marks the beginning of the era of religious tolerance. But, he adds, it was a compromise imposed by

circumstances rather than a free recognition of the rights of individuals. The ideal of "one country, one faith," still survived. "The mass of the people were furiously hostile." Moreover, the special privileges granted to the Protestants promoted the existence of a State within a State, and were incompatible with that absolutism and centralisation towards which the French monarchy, as a reaction from the disintegrating forces of the Wars of Religion, was being impelled even more swiftly than before.

A.—CONTEMPORARY AUTHORITIES

Perhaps the most important documentary source are the letters of Catherine de' Medici, whose industry was prodigious. *Lettres*, ed. H. de La Ferrière (i.-v.) and G. Baguenault de Puchesse (vi.-x.), 10 vols., 1880-1909 (*Documents inédits*).

The letters of Henry IV. are of importance from 1570. *Lettres missives*, ed. Berger de Xivrey 9 vols. with Supplement (ed. Guadet), 1872-1876, (*Doc. inéd.*). Vols. i.-iv. relate to the Wars of Religion.

For the valuable reports of our Ambassadors in France, see *Calendars of State Papers*, Foreign, ed. J. Stephenson (i.-vii.), A. J. Crosby (viii.-xi.). A. J. Butler (xii.-xvii.), S. C. Lomas (xviii.-xix.),

Other documentary sources are Michel de l'Hôpital, *Œuvres*, ed. Dufey, 5 vols., 1824. N. Weiss, *La Chambre ardente*, 1889. *Mémoires de Condé*, 6 vols., The Hague, 1743. *Mémoires-journaux du duc de Guise*, 1547-1561, Michaud et Poujoulat, vi.; Petitot, lv.-lvi. (essential for the Conspiracy of Amboise and the First Civil War). These last two, in spite of their title, are not memoirs,

but collections of documents. A similar collection is that made by the Protestant Simon Goulart—*Mémoires de la Ligue—contenant les événements les plus remarquables depuis 1576 jusqu' . . . en 1598* 6 vols., Amsterdam, 1758.

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[Pierre de La Place, *Commentaires de l'Estat de la Religion et République sous les Rois Henry et Francois seconds, et Charles neuvieme*, 1565 (covering the period 1556–1561), and Louis Regnier de La Planche, *Histoire de l'Estat de France sous le règne de François II.*, 1576, ed. E. Mennechet, 2 vols., 1836, in spite of their Protestant bias, are of considerable historical value for the short period to which they relate.

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The memoirs of this memoir-writing age, some of which have great literary merit, are even less trustworthy than most memoirs, but those of Claude Haton of Provins (ed. F. Bourquelot in the *Collection des documents inédits*, 2 vols., 1857) are valuable as representing the point of view of a provincial *curé* and as throwing much light on the miserable condition of the country during the religious wars; while in the last (No. xxvi.) of the *Discours politiques et militaires* of the capable and high-minded Huguenot leader, François de La Noue (Basle, 1587; Buchon, xii.; Michaud, ix.; Petitot, xxxiii.–xxxiv.), entitled *Observations sur plusieurs*

choses advenues aux trois premiers troubles, we have a fairly impartial account and criticism of some important events in which the writer played a prominent part.

The following are the principal pamphlets:

1. FRANÇOIS HOTMAN: *Epistre envoyée au Tigre de la France* (1560).

2. LOUIS REGNIER DE LA PLANCHE: *Du grand et loyal devoir, fidelite, et obeissance de messieurs de Paris envers le Roy et Couronne de France, adressee à messieurs Claude Guyot. . . Eschevins de laditte ville de Paris*, 1565. This is commonly known as *Le Livre des Marchands*.

3. *Dialogue auquel sont traitées plusieurs choses avenues aux Lutheriens et Huguenots de la France*, 1573; republished, with the addition of a second part, as *Le Reveille-Matin des Francois et de leurs voisins. Composé par Eusebe Philadelphie Cosmopolite, en forme de Dialogues*, 1574.

4. F. HOTMAN: *Francogallia*, 1573.

5. *Discours merveilleux de la vie, actions et deportemens de Catherine de Medicis*, 1575.

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6. *Le Tocsain contre les massacreurs et auteurs des confusions en France . . . Adressé à tous les princes Chrestiens*, 1577.

7. *Vindiciæ contra tyrannos*: . . . *Stephano Junio Bruto Celta auctore*, 1579.

8. PIERRE DE BELLOY: *Apologie Catholique* . . . 1585.

9. LOUIS DORLEANS: *Apologie ou defence des Catholiques unis* . . . 1586.

10. MICHEL HURAUT: *Excellent et libre discours sur l'estat présent de la France* . . . 1588.

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12. *Dialogue d'entre le Maheustre et le Manant*, 1593.

13. *La vertu du Catholicon d'Espagne: Avec un Abregé de la tenue des Estats de Paris* . . . 1594; *Satyre Menippée de la vertu du Catholicon d'Espagne et de la tenue des Estatz de Paris* . . . 1594.

B.—SECONDARY AUTHORITIES

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